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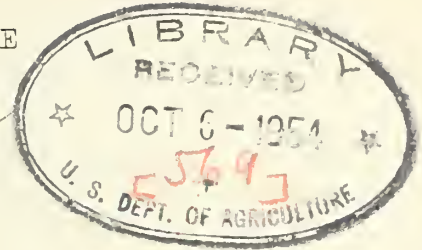
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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EXHIBIT SUGGESTION ;

Geographic Origin of Cultivated Food Plants Used in Family Food Supply  
Furnishes an Idea for State and County Fair Exhibits //

Miriam Birdseye, Extension Nutritionist

A suggestion for lending interest to well established projects in Living at Home, Farm Food Supply Plan, Pantry Stores, or Vegetable Gardening, will be found on page 3 in the notes on an "Educational Exhibit Showing the Geographic Origin of Cultivated Food Plants", set up in 1934 by the New York Botanical Garden at the fall flower show of the New York Horticultural Society. We have underlined certain sentences in this description which seem especially significant.

The exhibit required both wall and table space. On the wall were large colored maps showing Eastern and Western hemispheres, respectively, with the early centers of civilization plainly marked: Asia Minor, Northern India, Central and Southern China, the Mediterranean Basin, Mexico, Bolivia, Peru, etc. On the broad table in front of each map were grouped the small fruits, tree fruits, vegetables, grains, and nuts originating in that hemisphere, with a narrow ribbon connecting each product to the appropriate center of origin.

An extension exhibit may well follow the same general plan, but the number of plant products should probably be narrowed to those desirable for a generously adequate family food supply in the locality. If desired, the exhibit may be enlarged to include also such foods of plant origin as a family might purchase to supplement the food produced, as for example dried fruits, coffee, tea, and spices.

The interest would be enhanced by securing through the costume design department of the college or local high school, or from other sources, cardboard cutouts of men and women in authentic historic costumes of the respective centers of origin, and grouping the foods around these figures.

Posters should tie the exhibit to the extension program by indicating for example that the Farm Food Supply Plan or the Vegetable Garden Budget brings together for the farm family, of blank County or State, foods which built up the great civilizations of two hemispheres. An enlarged copy of a yearly food supply plan or a small model of a vegetable garden or a pantry with canned and stored foods might indicate the extension activity to which the exhibit is tied.

Such an exhibit has definite educational value and might well be worked up for State fairs or for counties majoring in foods and nutrition. Properly carried out it would require considerable thought and advance planning. The list furnished by the Botanical Garden may be checked and possibly enlarged by using a standard encyclopedia of horticulture. The county or State library doubtless can provide books telling of the development of the early civilizations included in the exhibit and of the life of country families within them, and these books might well furnish material for readings and reviews for local clubs for some months, in preparation for the exhibit or following it. The National Geographic Magazine is an excellent source of illustrations on contemporary life, costumes, and foods in foreign countries.



GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN OF THE CULTIVATED FOOD PLANTS

Special Educational Exhibit of the New York Botanical Garden  
at the 1934 Autumn Exhibition of the Horticultural Society  
of New York

All cultivated plants were derived from wild species. Every important cultivated food plant now utilized was actually in cultivation at the dawn of recorded history.

This exhibit demonstrates that all of the cultivated cereals except maize or Indian corn, and most of the temperate zone vegetables and fruits are of European or Asiatic origin. These include wheat, barley, rye, oats, rice, millet, sorghum, Italian millet, buckwheat, turnip, carrot, parsnip, beet, cabbage, chard, mustard, radish, onion, leek, garlic, spinach, egg-plant, lettuce, endive, celery, asparagus, globe artichoke, pea, lentil, broad bean, apple, pear, plum, cherry, wine grape, apricot, peach, prune, olive, fig, almond, melon, watermelon, cucumber, orange, lemon, lime, date, mango and many others. Not one of these was known in America until after they were introduced by the European colonists.

The important American contributions include maize or Indian corn, the potato, sweetpotato, all types of squashes and pumpkins, all varieties of garden and field beans, lima bean, tomato, pepper, Jerusalem artichoke, cacao, cashew, papaya, avocado, cassava or tapioca, and the peanut. These are the plants basic to the agriculture of North and South American on which the early high civilizations of Mexico, Central America, Bolivia, and Peru were based. Not one of them was known in Europe or Asia until after the voyage of Columbus in 1492.

In the history of civilization it may be noted that man failed to transmit his basic cultivated plants across either the Pacific or the Atlantic until the era of modern exploration beginning at the close of the 15th century; that is, the distribution of cultivated plants up to that time was limited to one or the other of the two hemispheres. The European and Asiatic civilizations were based on one series of cultivated plants, and the early American civilizations on a totally different series, quite unrelated to those of the Old World. In other words agriculture originated independently in various centers in both hemispheres, and in each case in or near those areas where our now cultivated food plants occurred as wild species. The important centers in America are Mexico, Central America, Bolivia, and Peru; in Eurasia the Mediterranean basin, southern Europe, Asia Minor, Central Asia, northern India and central and southern China. In other words there is a very close correlation between the places of origin of our cultivated food plants and the centers of origin of ancient civilizations.

E. C. Merrill, Director  
New York Botanical Garden

A photograph of the exhibit is found in an article entitled "Gold Medal for Food Plant Exhibited at Fall Flower Show", Jour. N.Y. Botanical Garden, Vol. 35, No. 420, page 283, Dec. 1934. Science Press Printing Company, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Single copy 10¢.







